

2-17-2012

On Metaphor and Progress: Nature in Literature and Landscape Painting in 19th-Century America (Flyer)

Rochelle Johnson
College of Idaho



Thomas Cole (1801-1848). View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm - The Oxbow. 1836. Oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 76 in. (130.8 x 193 cm). Gift of Mrs. Russell Sage, 1908 (08.228). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, U.S.A. Photo Credit: Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY



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In the mid-nineteenth century, artists and writers consciously worked together to express the power of the natural landscapes comprising their young nation, the United States. Artistic techniques informed literature, just as literary techniques informed landscape painting. The stories that both writers and artists told figured the landscape as a site of progress, resulting in fascinating uses of metaphor that continue to inform our ideas of nature.

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